
CHAPTER 7

MATILIJA TO LONDON AND BACK - THE LONG WAY

After the band from Connecticut broke up, I lived in my car and stayed with friends, girls, whatever, to keep a roof over my head for a little while. Young Rick Ventre moved to the west coast to go to school, so we rented a place together in Sherman Oaks. It was a great couple of years. Rick was in school, and I was still, and always will be, busy improving my playing. The neighborhood was alive with artists and musicians; I couldn't have been in a better place, space, or time.



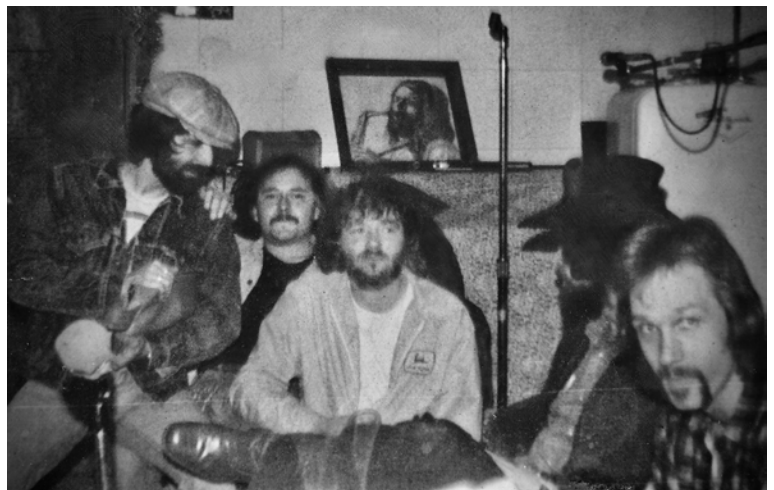
Rosemary Butler, Bonnie Bramlett, and TÁta Vega rehearsals for TRAP 2012, The Lobero Theatre, Santa Barbara

Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett lived on the next block, across the street a couple of doors down. Delaney was a singer, songwriter, musician, and producer. He was the Pied Piper of talent around Los Angeles in the '60s and '70s. It's hard to measure the depth of his influence on the music world in those days and beyond. Bramlett is remembered for his musical partnership with his then-wife, Bonnie Bramlett in the band Delaney & Bonnie and Friends. Bonnie was remarkable; we've known each other since then and played together. She's been part of The TRAP Concert Series in more recent years. Delaney passed in 2008, but his legacy of music and the players he influenced will last forever.

Eric Clapton played guitar with Delaney's band in

Europe. When he put his band Derick & the Domino's together, he hired most of Delaney's players and added Duane Allman to the recording. "Layla" was a song Clapton wrote with Dominos drummer Jim Gordon. It was about his forbidden love for the wife of his close friend George Harrison. Clapton's biography is compelling; I highly recommend it.

Most of the group known as Pollution, lived next door – James Quill Smith, Dobie Gray, and TÁta Vega. Bobby Keys and Jim Price, Delaney's horn players, later with The Rolling Stones, lived just a few doors to the left, and a kid named Eddie James, who was the lead singer in my favorite soul band Elijah, lived a few doors down to the right. Eddie became an extraordinary actor a few years later, using his name, Edward James Olmos. Eddie became a vital actor choosing roles that make a difference; roles that depict positive experiences and encourage us to change for the better. One such part comes to mind in "Stand and Deliver." I hadn't seen Eddie for 20 years when I ran into him at a Santana concert in the mid-'90s. He spotted me in the crowd and nearly knocked me over to say hi. Fame and fortune hadn't changed Eddie; he was still the same kid from the old Sherman Oaks neighborhood.



From Left to Right: Eddie Tuduri, Drums, Fred Rivera, Bass, Delaney Bramlett, Guitar, Vocals, Rick Allen, (not pictured exactly) Piano, and Tiger, Guitar. Circa 1972-1973

CHAPTER 9

THE BEACH BOYS & THE STONE CANYON BAND ...RESPECTFULLY

In 1973, I was gainfully employed. I had done enough work to beget more, and things started to look like I might be OK. I was working in the studio at Sound City on different projects. One day I was in studio A and heard The Beach Boys were in studio B. I was recording with Jerry McGee when Carl Wilson came in to listen. Jerry was a fantastic guitar player, and everyone who knew him wanted to check him out. Carl was impressed, and he also seemed to like my playing. A short time later, I got a call to work with The Beach Boys. I was working with Dobie Gray then and still naive enough to think that management and the business, in general, would remain loyal to sidemen like me. I turned The Beach Boys down at their first request, as I didn't want to leave Dobie hanging. After being summoned to the Troubadour in Los Angeles to hear what management called Dobie's real band, meaning the studio players from Nashville, I began to open my eyes. The opportunity came again as The Beach Boys planned an American tour in late 1973 to support the *Holland* album. "Sail on Sailor" was climbing up the charts, and it was the perfect time to hit the road. This time I accepted the gig gratefully. I worked with Carl Wilson in the studio on a handful of projects, and we got along very well. Ricky Fataar and Blondie Chaplin were playing in the band at the time, and it was a unique and eclectic bunch of incredible players. They surrounded themselves with great musicians and concentrated on their vocals and performance. Carly Munoz was on keyboards and Billy Hinche also played keyboards on the tour's first leg and then I invited my friend John Herron to join us later. Putter Smith was on bass and Ricky and I both played drums, and we had a percussionist as well. Ricky taught me how to play the grooves. I had never played this sort of Rock & Roll before, and the simplicity threw me. I don't know if I had ever played straight four-on-the-floor beats before this gig, and it wasn't easy. Ricky Fataar graciously showed me all the drum parts. I asked him



Ricky Fataar, (every instrument in the band)

to sit next to me in rehearsal so I could see what he was doing and then simply copied his playing.

As it turned out, we sounded pretty good playing these parts together, so I suggested we continue as two drummers. Carl agreed, so we concentrated on the grooves and made it happen. Sometimes later, there were a couple of positive interviews about this two-drummer concept with The Beach Boys. They gave me credit for suggesting it, but truth be known, Ricky kept me on my toes and the grooves honest. Left to my own devices, I'm afraid "Surfer Girl" would have sounded like a Blues tune.

This was my first time out with a band of that stature, and I was amazed at the day-to-day excitement and sheer "bigness" of it. I was also thrilled with the municipal auditoriums, the Maple Leaf Gardens, the Spectrum in Philadelphia, and Madison Square Gar-

disrespectful but also detrimental to your career. I've done several projects for which I received no credit. It happens to all of us more times than we'd like to admit; I'm certainly not alone in this.

There is no recourse legally. Companies are not obligated to give you credit. Who they list is entirely at their discretion, and sometimes they make honest mistakes. Few projects rise to the surface whenever I think about such things.

John Stewart recorded and released *Bombs Away Dream Babies*, including the song "Gold," in 1979. He would later stop performing the tune, calling it "vapid" and "empty," meaning nothing to him. He did it to satisfy his record company. Nevertheless, he was a prolific songwriter and performer with a career spanning 40 years that included almost four dozen albums and more than 600 recorded songs. Indeed, a significant contribution to the American songbook.

Perhaps he was angry about recording this song, maybe the reason for his behavior this night. But, looking back now, I have great respect for Mr. Stewart, and I wish my experience had been better.

In the late '70s, I got a call from a friend who was the recording engineer in a small but capable studio in North Hollywood. He was cleaning up some tracks for John Stewart's solo album. Unfortunately, the single for that record, called "Gold," had some technical problems. In those days, one of the better studio players was a kid named Michael Botts. Botts is probably best known for his work with the band Bread, however, he recorded with Linda Ronstadt, Karla Bonoff, Andrew Gold, Olivia Newton-John, Peter Cetera, Anne Murray, Warren Zevon, and Dan Fogelberg, among many others.

Although I never met Mike, we crossed paths often having worked with many of the same producers and artists (at different times.) Mike had initially done the track for "Gold," and his playing was impeccable and in the pocket. It seemed like a done deal at the time of tracking, but unfortunately, the recording didn't print well. To continue working on the track with corrupt tape was not possible. Mike Botts was off in Europe at the time touring, and Stewart wanted to finish the project. He could not wait for Botts,

so he asked my friend Patrick McDonald to recommend someone to overdub the sore spots. My friend called me, and I happily obliged. By the way, Patrick was Billy Joel's bass player when they opened for The Beach Boys.

Stewart seemed agitated the whole time I was there. It was like walking into an icebox with no vibe, no niceties. Finally, he told me what he wanted me to do; it was cut and dried. "Ok, no problem," I said and went about doing my job. The original bass drum part was straight 4's and salvageable but everything in the overheads, meaning cymbals, snare drum, and hi-hat, needed to be replaced. So, we put a strong 2 & 4 in the track, a hi-hat part, and one drum fill (on the snare).

I played the parts exactly as asked and began to pack up my things and head out. Stewart offered me \$25.00 for my work. Not only was he cold and rude, but cheap. Nevertheless, I looked at it as a favor to my friend, so I took the money and headed for the door. "Wait a minute," he said. "Would you mind putting a cymbal crash in this part while you're here?" "Well, gee," I thought. "Do you think I could get another five bucks?" At this point, I took Patrick aside and said, "Listen, man, here's a guy on a major label with a substantial budget. What the fuck? Do you think he could treat me with a bit of respect? At least ask him to put me in for one single-scale session."

Reporting a recording session to the Union/record company is the producer's responsibility or, in this case, the artist. Every professional recording company that honors contracts will pay a musician union scale per three-hour recording date. In those days, the scale was about \$150.00 every three hours. Stewart was visibly upset with my request but reluctantly agreed to pay. I finished my job, said thanks very much and went home. Some months later, I began hearing this song on the radio. He had added Stevie Nicks as a duet, and "Gold" became a big hit. I thought, well, all is not lost; I'll add this credit to my calling card. So, I went to the store to purchase the record. What? Do you think John Stewart would have given me one? As I was saying, I went to the store to buy the record, and low and behold, the credit next to "Gold" read Drums: Michael Botts.

that super-star dispensation in all things. The luxury, fame, privilege, and reverence are far from the busy crowd of musical worker bees who strive to make ends meet. In the music business, sidemen are men and women who pack a lunch and go to work like everyone else, day in and day out. We play on CDs, songwriter demos, live recordings, TV shows, commercials, and movie scores. Others find themselves touring on a bus, van, or station wagon for months. Our teachers are also noble, yet sometimes thankless, warriors on the front lines of anyone's success.

In February 1968, my first trip across the country was in a '56 Chevy panel truck with a broken passenger window. We arrived in Los Angeles *broke as a bag of glass* (again) and hungry. The four of us stayed in a one-room motel room until we got our first gig at The Image on Van Nuys Boulevard in San Fernando Valley. We worked six nights and a matinee on Sunday for \$66.00 a week each. Please don't misunderstand; we were young, indestructible, and having the time of our lives, but it wasn't all a bed of roses.

No one ever said royalties, fame, fortune, and sideman in the same sentence. Unless you're a winning songwriter or a very successful band sharing in the overall profits, you're a musical worker bee like me.

So, let's see, who should be in The Hall of Fame? Should it be the band on a private Lear Jet eating caviar that travels primarily in Limos or the cats who drive all night eating peanut butter and Ritz crackers stuffed in a station wagon to make that gig at the Moose Lodge in Sandusky?

The friendships and camaraderie I enjoy as a player in the music business are exceptional. More people than I can acknowledge were there for me in the good and the bad times. Most musicians have a unique bond that far outweighs the otherwise competitive nature of the profession.

*I enjoy the award shows as much as the next guy and applaud my friends who walk away with the trophies. They, too, at least most, had to work as hard as everyone else to get there. For every Hall of Famer, there are a thousand guys and gals whose musical

prowess and hard work helped to push their wagons to the top. So why not nominate a few "Sidemen" or "How about a Teacher"? Wouldn't that be nice?

Gary Chaffee, Dave Garibaldi, or Ralph Humphrey.

I was just thinking out loud.

Here are two men whose names will ring true forever in the land of drums and music. Both live and in their many recordings over the years.

Their contribution is as stunning as it is prolific.

Though Carlos has left us, he has left us so much music, so much love, heart and soul, there will never be another Carlos Vega. R.I.P. Carlos

In addition to having been an inspiration to many, including me, Tris continues to thrill audiences in every musical endeavor he pursues.

*One of my favorite recorded drum tracks ever is "This is It" by the great Kenny Loggins.

That's Tris Imboden on drums.

CHAPTER 35

POCKETS AT THE LOBERO, SANTA BARBARA 2021 AND 2022

After struggling through some of the most arduous, sad, and challenging years, we peeked our heads out from the dark cloud of Covid. It wasn't over by any means, but the restrictions were lifted, so we might proceed cautiously. The Lobero required masks from patrons. You needn't be vaccinated, yet everyone must show proof of recent negative covid tests to assure safety.

This was a reasonable request, as hundreds of people, including me, felt much better about venturing out in that crowd.



Below are Left to Right: Lothar Struff, Lynn Fanelli, Kenny Lee Lewis, Leslie Lembo, and Diane Steinberg Lewis.



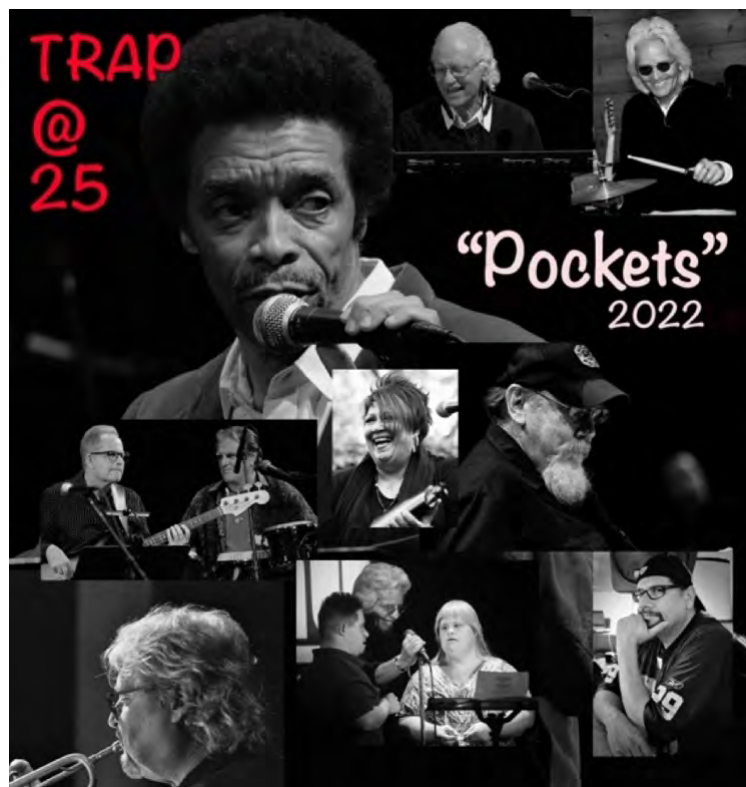
In 2021 we decided to roll back the guest artists and keep our band at the forefront. Pockets has been supporting the program for the better part of 20 years and so we thought to keep it simple and in the family. Humbly put, when you're backing someone up, you're a side-man supporting someone else's music. When you're playing with your band, you create your own vibe. That's exhilarating.

The TRAP benefit at The Lobero, 2021



An unusual feeling came over us at this concert. Because we didn't have a name artist, we didn't sell many tickets, nor did we expect to. About 300 people showed up; believe me, it was the best crowd we had ever experienced at The Lobero. There were moments when I felt the band and the audience were the same. It was like playing for our neighbors, loved ones, and friends, as if we knew everyone in the audience.

Over the past few years, I've had help with drummers sitting in and taking the edge off the show's intensity and supporting my energy. Tony Braunagel,



Willie Ornelas, Marty Fera, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Luis Conte were the rhythm section's backbone, including our regulars, Chris Trujillo, and Rick Geragi. Who can miss this wall of Latin, Rock, R&B, Jazz, Pop & Blues just over my shoulder or sitting right next to me on the second set of drums.

Again, it's too bad I couldn't get anyone good.